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(No. 13) -- Good and Bad Animal Shelters

Humane Information Services, Inc.

REPORT TO HUMANITARIANS

No. 13 — September, 1970

Humane Information Services Incorporated

A NON-PROFIT SOCIETY FURNISHING INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS FOR USE IN PROGRAMS FOR THE HUMANE TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

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Good and Bad Animal Shelters

LOCAL SOCIETY ANIMAL SHELTERS CONSTITUTE THE BASE OF THE HUMANE MOVEMENT

The local animal shelter is the foundation of the humane movement. Probably 98 percent of the millions of dollars spent annually for humane work goes directly or indirectly into the operation of shelters.

Nobody knows how many animal shelters are operated by humane societies in the United States, but a conservative estimate would be over 500. They vary tremendously in size, facilities, number of animals handled, and operating policies and methods. They range from a comparative few excellently equipped and managed shelters to many that have only rudimentary facilities or deplorably poor management.

Critical Analysis

This article is an attempt to evaluate the local humane society shelter facilities and their operations as a part of our over-all examination of the effectiveness of the humane movement. This series of articles began in Report to Humanitarians No. 11 (March, 1970), in which the need for such an evaluation was explained. In this article we do not attempt to cover many aspects of shelter operation which will be treated in subsequent issues.

This examination of local society shelters is purposely highly critical. We are not out to butter up our friends who are engaged in running these shelters, in order to win their support of Humane Information Services. Some of these friends will get mad when they read what we have to say; if they didn't, it would not be worth reading!

Shelters Need Continuous Self-Examination

Every successful business enterprise must continuously review its operations and policies for the purpose of determining what it is doing well, what it is doing badly, and what it can and should do to increase its effectiveness. Humane organizations have the same basic need for continuing critical self-appraisal and objective examination of operating policies and methods. Unfortunately, they frequently do not receive such searching internal appraisals.

This is not to say that criticism and dissension is not encountered among the members and in the meetings of humane societies. Far from it! The humane movement is notorious for its criticism, denunciations and dissension. This is an entirely different matter than constructive self-appraisal and objective examination of operating policies and methods. The emotion-charged upheavals which occur periodically in many societies rarely are constructive, objective, factual and effective.

Basis for Evaluation

Ask the average animal lover and humanitarian what he or she would consider to be the most important points to cover in an evaluation of animal shelters, and you will come up with something like this:

Do the animals have a continuous supply of good drinking water, and do they receive nourishing food at least once a day? Are the dog cages sufficiently large to permit free movement, and do they have exercise runs? Are species and sexes separated, and are ill, injured and well animals, as well as pugnacious and gentle ones, kept separate? Are the floors heated, and if not are wooden pallets provided for sleeping? Is the building heated and air conditioned? Do the cat cages provide for free movement, climbing and sharpening of claws? Are all cages kept clean and sanitary? Is the shelter free of objectionable odors? Are animals received examined carefully for disease or injury? Does the shelter pick up injured, stray or unwanted animals for a reasonable fee? Are vigorous efforts made to find homes for the animals? Are the shelter attendants kind to the animals, and do they handle them gently?

Nobody knows the answers to these questions, insofar as they apply to all animal shelters. Humane Information Services has on its future agenda a survey of all animal shelters and public pounds, using a "probability sample", which would furnish answers to these and many other specific questions about shelters which are not now available.

But these really are the superficial aspects of shelter operation. We know pretty much what constitutes good shelter operation insofar as these considerations are concerned. Shelter managements generally are trying to improve these conditions. The large national societies, through their publications and field representatives, are working constantly to help the shelters benefit from the experience of other shelters, in order to improve their present facilities and operations.

These conditions, however, are not of primary importance in determining the effectiveness of local societies in dealing with the humane problems associated with dogs and cats. The answers to all of the foregoing questions may be in the affirmative, yet the total amount of suffering undergone by dogs and cats in the community may be as great as or greater than it ever was, and greater than in some other communities where facilities for care of the animals in the shelter are not nearly so good.

In other words, the amount of suffering undergone by the pet animals of the community is determined in only a small way by how the ones cared for at the shelter are treated during their brief stay in the facility. A defective euthanasia chamber can create far more intense suffering for the animals, in a few minutes, than they may be spared while in their cages. And it is the larger policies and activities of the local society which really determine its effectiveness in the elimination of pet animal suffering. These are things which are not noticed by members and the people of the community. But they are the things which will be given greatest weight in this evaluation of local society shelters.

Funds Not the Major Problem

Ask almost any local humane society director or officer what is most needed to improve the operations of the society, and you will get this answer: "More money." Yet, as more and more funds have been poured into shelters, it is very doubtful that results, in terms of reduction of animal suffering and "the prevention of cruelty to animals", have risen correspondingly.

Nearly all shelter directors and officers have very specific needed improvements in mind. Most or all of these are additional physical facilities or personnel: increased capacity, air conditioning, a new incinerator, additional ambulances, more shelter attendants, a clinic.

All of these objectives are only means to an end. Sometimes it is easy to confuse means with ends. Providing a particular facility may or may not contribute to the end, either absolutely or relative to what could be done with the same amount of money used for some other purpose.

For example, a society may put on a fund-raising drive to provide a veterinary "clinic" at the shelter. This clinic could have a number of functions: (1) to provide continuous veterinary supervision of the sanitary precautions taken at the shelter, and examination of animals received, to avoid epidemics and to insure that only good, healthy animals are put out for adoption, a most important and useful function, but one which can be fulfilled without operation of a clinic; (2) to provide a means of veterinary treatment of injured and sick dogs or cats brought into the shelter or picked up by its ambulances; (3) to provide a spaying and neutering service for animals adopted out of the shelter or for the general public; (4) to provide veterinary treatment of dogs and cats for owners who can afford to pay none or only part of the charges for such care by commercial animal clinics.

If the shelter clinic charges the going rates for spaying and neutering, which is the most common situation because of the opposition of private veterinarians to cut prices and the consequent difficulty of obtaining professional personnel for the clinic, it contributes little or nothing to a reduction of the surplus. It is merely a "handy" service to pet owners, new and old.

If, for similar reasons, the clinic charges commercial rates for other veterinary services, all that is provided which is not already available is a possibly better veterinary service giving pet owners more confidence that their animals are receiving the best possible treatment and that they are not paying for work which is unneeded just to provide income for a commercial clinic.

A humane society clinic performing these functions may make a substantial profit from its operations which helps to pay other expenses of the society. We have no objections whatever to this, or to clinics operated by humane societies. Some of them are models of up-to-date veterinary care, better than that which can be obtained in many commercial clinics. The important point we wish to make is that funds going into such projects frequently do not significantly reduce over-all animal suffering. So far as the humanitarians who comprise the society's membership are concerned, they may derive a comfortable feeling that "animals received at our shelter receive the best of veterinary care". But even more to improve veterinary care of animals in the community might be accomplished by a committee working with commercial veterinarians to upgrade facilities and methods of private clinics.

The really important danger arising from the operation of such clinics is that management concentration upon the goal of operating a model clinic [illegible] from other, far more important humane problems which the society should be solving, and that the pride which members take in their society because of the operation of the clinic may blind them to serious deficiencies in dealing with more urgent problems. Complacency arising from what is in plain sight for all to see may cover up the shortcomings which lie beneath the surface.

Clinics furnish only one of many examples of the fact that ample funds and fine physical facilities are far less important than good operating policies and methods in the elimination of animal suffering. We know of a very well-equipped society shelter, which has even an impressive meeting room for members and visiting groups, and the latest in ambulance equipment, neatly uniformed personnel, and everything kept in spic-and-span condition. Everything, that is, except the

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euthanasia chamber, which was a model of a cruel torture chamber of the ancient days of the Inquisition. Management, in most respects capable and humane-minded, was completely unaware of this condition, which when discovered by an "outside" critic was corrected by a few simple changes. The case is cited merely to illustrate the principle that ample funds and facilities are not the sole, nor even the major need of humane society shelters. Good management is the real key to effectiveness in shelter operation.

What is Good Management?

It is the firm conviction of Humane Information Services that, by and large, the employed personnel of humane societies are generally more sincere, capable people than will be found elsewhere at similar levels of compensation. It must be that many of them love animals.

Frequently, also, management is by unpaid officers, many of whom devote long hours to the sometimes disagreeable tasks without any compensation. Many of these officers are employed in private business capacities or are retired from jobs carrying sufficient responsibilities and compensation to indicate above-average abilities.

The real failures of humane society and shelter managements generally are not a result of lack of either personal ability or good intentions, but can be traced mainly to three conditions: (1) the absence of well-thought-out, clearly-conceived goals; (2) lack of proper supervision by directors of the personnel immediately responsible for management; (3) uninformed members and other people in the community.

Absence of Effective Goals

Humane Information Services believes that the absence of well-conceived and defined objectives is by far the most important reason for failure of local societies and the animal shelters they operate to achieve their real potentials for reducing animal suffering. In fact, this underlies all of the other deficiencies of management.

Animal Welfare, Not Society Welfare

Many local societies and shelters seem to be operated as if the goal in view is the welfare of the society rather than the welfare of animals. Proposed policies and actions are judged by their probable effects on the public image and financial condition of the society or shelter, rather than what they might accomplish in reducing animal suffering. After years of hard work, the officers and directors of the society are proud of their handiwork. The facility becomes "their shelter" rather than the "animals' shelter". They view it in much the same light as they do their own homes. Appearances tend to take on more importance than basic accomplishment. A sparkling grooming room proudly shown to visitors becomes more important than a really humane euthanasia chamber kept hidden in a back room. Attention to superficial appearances takes so much time that none is left over for serious pursuit of basic programs.

Prevent Suffering, Not Death

Another reason why effective and realistic goals are not set, or policies established to achieve them are not adopted, is that very many humanitarians are sadly confused in their own thinking about what constitutes animal welfare. In general, they have the idea of saving animals from death, rather than from suffering.

That these two goals are not the same, and that following the first goal frequently leads to more rather than less suffering, was brought out in Report to Humanitarians No. 9 (September, 1969).

This particular confusion over goals leads to all kinds of mistaken policies, and to perpetuation of the suffering of animals, particularly the dogs and cats handled by humane society shelters. The resistance to "putting animals to sleep" probably is the greatest single reason that we continue to have an increasing need for shelters. As we brought out in Report No. 12, it is the principal reason why shelters do not establish a realistic adoption policy. It wastes large sums of humane society money in increasing the capacity of shelters in a completely vain attempt to avoid destruction of the surplus animals received. It results in spending for surgical or other treatment of injured or sick animals which if saved and adopted out merely replace other animals which must be destroyed. It results in hundreds of devoted animal lovers keeping their homes full of dogs or cats which sap funds and energies which otherwise could be devoted to effective humane work. And we could go on to enumerate many other deficiencies which can be traced directly to this confusion over humane goals.

In this connection we would like to cite one somewhat typical example, of one of our good friends who is a fanatically devoted animal lover and humanitarian. When she reads this she will be hurt and offended, but we risk that unwelcome result because her experience so well illustrates the undesirable consequences of this confusion over goals.

This lady was a director of a local humane society who made herself persona non grata with the other directors and officers by continually criticizing the shelter conditions and policies. She had ample justification for some of her criticisms, and could have become a source of much good in improving the shelter's operations. But she was aghast at the large proportion of the animals received at the shelter which had to be destroyed. She was fanatically opposed to euthanasia, and vigorously advocated a large increase in the shelter's capacity, being so blinded by her opposition to taking any animal's life that she could not understand the simple mathematical fact that once the new cages were filled, exactly the same number of animals as before would have to be destroyed (many shelter managers and directors may think we are discussing their own society, such instances are so common).

The upshot of it was, the lady was deposed as a director, thus losing her opportunity to be a continuing stimulus for improvement in the shelter's operations. With several friends having the same ideas, she incorporated a new local society, and set up a new shelter, using a good many thousands of dollars of her own savings. The ladies who ran it devoted themselves unstintingly to its operation, and received the praises, but not too much financial support, of those who visited the new shelter. The shelter soon was filled, and since they followed strict adoption policies and destroyed no healthy animals, it was not long before they were compelled to turn away all except a few of the animals brought to the shelter. The animals refused admittance had to be taken to the old-established humane society shelters. The net result, therefore, was that the new shelter was filled to capacity with animals costing a lot to keep, all taking funds away from potentially productive humane work, without reducing the number of animals in the community which must be destroyed. The lady seems puzzled that the number of animals her shelter is able to place for adoption is so much less than the number people would like to bring there, and vaguely seems to blame the community for lack of support.

One other example may be cited. An old-established humane society shelter came under the control of a well-to-do former businessman with a board of directors composed largely of people with similar backgrounds who knew little or nothing about animal shelters, but "projected a good public image". They left everything to the society president. The shelter was comparatively well financed, and formerly was generally considered to be an above-average institution. Suddenly, "all hell broke loose". Employees circulated stories which were fe tured in the local press and on TV, about sick and dieing animals in great profusion at the shelter, which was so crowded that sanitary precautions were made virtually i possible. It seems that the president did not believe in destroying healthy animals. Some dogs had been around the place for ov a year. The expense of taking care of suc a large inventory, especially under the crowded conditions, ate up the society's i come. In short, the whole establishment w a complete "mess", literally and figurativ ly.

Both of the communities involved in the two examples are more than usually generou in their support of humane societies. The is no apparent reason why humane society shelters in these communities should not b models which could be cited to show how hu mane accomplishment can be achieved. Only lack of effective and realistic goals, bas on a genuine understanding by members and directors of the society's place in a comm nity animal control program, made them com paratively ineffective and a continuing drain upon humane resources.

Effective and Realistic Goals

What should be the principal goals of a local society shelter?

(1) The primary objective should be the elimination of the conditions which originally gave rise to the need for the shelte the surplus of dogs and cats. Only the di est consequences, which usually will turn out to be imaginary, should serve to preve the inauguration and strict enforcement o policy of not adopting out unspayed femal dogs and cats and unneutered male cats. even this is not enough. The society sho actively pursue other avenues toward elim nation of the surplus.

(2) One of the most important of these avenues is active participation in a comm nity-wide small animal control program. This means not just ignoring, but working with any public pound or dog wardens, whe er or not you approve of the way they hav been doing things in the past. What sati faction can the members, directors and of cers of a humane society shelter derive f knowing that the animals they handle are well treated, if a much larger number of imals handled by other facilities in the community are poorly treated, or are allo to contribute to the continuing surplus? The fact that the pounds or wardens may g or sell animals to laboratories should no prevent working with them to reduce the s plus, without which there would be no ani mals to be sold or given for experimentation.

Although these truths should be self-evident, as has been said, there are ple of local humane society shelters which st their noses in the air and assume a paine expression when mention is made of these other facilities. Humane society shelte managers and officers frequently never e visit the local pound, and know little o nothing about conditions there. If thes conditions are not good, the society sho work with the pound management to improv them.

Active and effective participation in community control program also requires, many cases, revisions of our ideas about censing, fees, rabies vaccination, leash laws and other features of dog and cat c trol. Very many humanitarians and profe animal lovers oppose any controls which pear to limit pet ownership. This is an other manifestation of the "save-an-animal's-life" syndrome. Over the long run there will be much less animal suffering pet ownership is made more difficult for those unable or unwilling to stand the e pense of properly caring for a pet, and otherwise would contribute to the surplu

Similarly, many animal lovers and hum tarians vigorously oppose substantial li cense fees, higher fees for unspayed fe males, licensing of cat owners, leash la and almost any form of pet animal contro

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which could do so much to eliminate animal suffering resulting from the continuing surplus production of puppies and kittens.

On a tour of European humane societies several years ago, this writer was struck by the complete absence of mangy, malnourished dogs on the streets of some countries such as Denmark, despite the few animal shelters and pounds. We were told that this situation reflects strict animal control laws and enforcement. No country is more humane-minded than Denmark. A surplus of cats and dogs such as exists in the United States is not found in these countries where determined efforts have been made to avoid it. We can do the same, if we set our objectives, not merely to "rescue" individual animals, but to work with all elements of the community to bring about effective pet animal controls. The initiative must come from humanitarians and humane societies, not from the public or governmental bodies who have less interest in animal welfare. We must cooperate with, not fight, the people of the communities.

Failure of Local Societies to Participate in Broader Programs

One of the greatest deficiencies of local humane societies is the almost complete failure of many of them to engage in any significant humane activity beyond the handling of animals in their shelters. Not only do they exhibit great indifference to national humane programs such as those to reduce the suffering of food and fur animals, but also to local humane problems which are not directly related to dogs, cats and shelter operation.

There are far more members of local than of national humane societies. If the local societies really tried to bring their members into active contact with humane work beyond the horizons of the shelter, the over-all effectiveness of the humane movement would be vastly increased.

The failure of local societies to do this reflects many conditions, including the desire to keep all their members' contributions to themselves, the wish to avoid controversy, and the mere lack of time in the case of smaller societies. For the big-city societies, which generally are the most deficient in this highly important respect, the real cause is management.

The highly-paid "executive directors" of these big societies are primarily administrators, not humanitarians. They feel that their worth as administrators will be judged by the shelter operation itself. So, they give this most or all of their attention. People in the humane movement who blame them for this are unreasonable. As hired managers, they try to do what the directors of the societies seem to want them to do. The ones really at fault are the directors, and behind them the members of the societies.

Lack of Proper Supervision by Directors

The unpaid officers and boards of directors of such societies frequently become mere figureheads, exercising little or no control over the actual management. A hired manager who is reasonably good at public relations and who maintains a clean, alert shelter operation finds little difficulty in winning unquestioning support from enough directors to effectively control nominations, elections and other business of the society. A great deal of poppycock is put out about "democratic control" of humane societies, but the officers of Humane Information Services offhand can think of very few if any which really are democratically controlled. Either a salaried manager exercises control, or, in the case of some small societies, one or two aggressive and hard-working leaders do so. Directors, like the members of so-called "advisory committees" or "boards of advisors", usually are elected mainly as a means of buttering up potential contributors and people with important public or humane society connections. A prime qualification is a willingness to go along with management.

In the larger, more affluent societies, directorships frequently are strictly "fronts" for so-called "community service" by "public-spirited citizens" who are employees of business corporations. The latter cultivate good public images by encouraging their employees to support and join in the activities of community organizations. Many who do so consider it just a part of their jobs, like driving a hundred miles to address the annual banquet of some local chamber of commerce. They have little or no knowledge of humane problems and alternative solutions, or of what other local societies are doing.

Under these circumstances, the directors of the larger societies operating animal shelters are quite likely to have exactly the same primary objectives as the employed executive director: to maintain a good public image, keep the dues and contributions rolling in, satisfy the municipality or county if it is performing services for it under contract, and avoid offending any important group such as the veterinarians.

If the executive manager succeeds in fulfilling these objectives, the directors go happily along, rubber-stamping the proposals of the manager, and never thinking seriously about what are the really important functions of a humane society operating an animal shelter, and how well the particular society is fulfilling them.

Humane society shelters are not the only organizations encountering these circumstances and problems. Business corporations, likewise, frequently have only nominal control of salaried management by directors and stockholders. As in the case of humane societies, only when the mistakes made become so gross and obvious, and the general dissatisfaction with results among stockholders (or members) becomes so strong that it cannot be ignored, do the directors take steps to rectify the conditions.

But there is one big difference between business corporations and humane societies in this regard: results for the former are rather easily measured in terms of earnings and dividends, which in the final analysis are the only things in which stockholders are interested. For the humane society shelter, real results are far more difficult to evaluate, and management finds it much easier to camouflage the actual failure to produce them by being good at doing the superficial things which the directors, members and general public are persuaded to accept as most important.

If one measures the humane movement and its parts in terms of money received and spent, and number of animals handled, by far the most important segments are the big-city society shelters. This is where the million-dollar annual budgets are found. The entire annual budget of Humane Information Services would not pay the utility bills of one of these big-city societies for a month. Just the salary of the executive director of any one of these societies is about four times greater than the entire budget of HIS, Inc.

If, then, we are evaluating the performance of the humane movement, as we started out to do beginning with Report to Humanitarians No. 11, the subject matter of this section is a major part of the evaluation. Concede, if you will, that we have put our finger on the basic cause, or reason why the performance of these big humane society shelters is so far below what it could and should be. But how can this seemingly insurmountable obstacle to real improvement be overcome? The answer to that question will be found in the next section.

Uninformed Members and Public The Key to Shelter Shortcomings

The solution to nearly all of the shortcomings of animal shelters discussed in the foregoing sections is a better-informed membership of the societies which operate them and better-informed people in the community.

There has been a great amount of talk in the humane movement, but little action, about the need for humane education. Always those expressing this belief have in mind educating somebody other than themselves. They wish to promote the "humane ethic", to have children brought up with the right attitudes toward animals, to make people realize their responsibilities toward animals, in general to promote kindness and a "reverence for all life". In a future Report to Humanitarians we will examine this whole subject of humane education, its past effectiveness or lack of effectiveness, some of the newer concepts of humane education, and what might be done to improve the humane movement's performance in this field. In the present discussion we are concerned only with one phase of this important subject.

It rarely occurs to the humanitarians that the most needed and effective humane education is that applied directly to those who come into direct contact with animal welfare activities. All of our most important failures to bring genuine and major improvements in the welfare of animals can be traced directly to the failure of devoted animal lovers and humanitarians themselves to understand the problems and alternative solutions.

So long as their members are uninformed, the local societies operating animal shelters will continue to follow the policies which produce emotional satisfactions, a continuing flow of contributions, and support for the shelters' managements. It is the natural law of survival, which operates for humane societies as well as for animals.

The policies of local societies also are influenced by the general level of understanding of humane problems on the part of the general public of the community. All too many local societies make no real effort to inform the public about humane problems. They emphasize those aspects of publicity which tend to bring more adoptions or contributions. Some have very capable humane education or public relations directors, who obtain valuable newspaper, TV and radio publicity about the animals at the shelter awaiting adoption, but in all of the large volume of such publicity that has come to our attention there is almost never a reference to the number of animals received that are destroyed, and why. Granted, it is much easier to get an editor to run a touching picture of a tail-wagging dog looking through the wire mesh of a cage, or of the rescue of a pelican caught in a fishing hook and line, than to persuade him to accept a well-thought-out article on pet animal controls. But our job, as humanitarians interested in eliminating animal suffering, is not to follow the lines of least resistance. It is to buck the kind of resistance which has prevented really effective action in dealing with the many problems associated with pet animals.

National Societies Also Remiss

Which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Should the local society shelter management take the initiative, or should an informed membership initiate demands for drastic changes in policies? Obviously, neither will occur unless and until some third force is introduced into the picture, which will both inform the member humanitarians and bring pressure to bear upon the shelter managements to keep policy reform right up to the margin permitted by the gradually more-informed members.

What third party? The only possible answer to this is the collection of national, regional and state humane societies. Their publications go to the local societies, which also are visited by their field men. But they have not been making any noticeable progress, or even been attempting to do so. The publications going to the local societies contain the same assortments of innocuous pap that most of the local societies dish out to their members.

Recently one of our members wrote that she had a file of the major publication of a national society going back many years. Using her spare time, she was indexing, with brief descriptive designations, all of the articles which had appeared in the publication. This is a very much-needed service, and we asked for a sample covering one subject. She sent us the one for articles dealing with the surplus of dogs and cats. It contained 26 items, not one of which purported to be any comprehensive discussion of the subject. Most were the usual blurbs about the need for spaying, about spaying clinics opened in different parts of the country, etc. Yet, this national society is noted for its aggressiveness and dedication to reduction of the surplus. Long letters we have received over the years from officers of the same society have, collectively, very well outlined most of the surplus problems and alternatives discussed in our Report No. 12. But the stuff they had been putting out to members contained the usual pap which would make nobody mad and could elicit no action to eliminate the surplus.

Likewise, the field representatives of the national societies, many of them highly capable and well-informed men, rarely get into the really controversial aspects of shelter operation when they deliver talks at annual membership meetings and discuss problems with local society directors and

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Our Officers' Corner

Your Letters Were Great!

Recently we received some very thought-provoking letters about the surplus and other problems. We had hoped to include excerpts from some of them in this Report, but found we could not do so and still cover the equally important subjects discussed herein. Sooner or later we will include the subject matter covered by these letters in a Report, and are saving them for this purpose. Thank you for writing, and keep your letters coming. In this Report we refer to the great need for educating humanitarians as well as the public. We, too, are humanitarians, and your letters are helping to educate us!

Requests to Mention Other Humane Society Projects

We frequently receive requests from individual humanitarians, and from officers of other humane societies, to include in our Reports to Humanitarians notices of money needs or fund-raising drives. Others suggest including references to subjects or programs which do not fit into our current Report. For example, we recently received a request to include a plea for contributions to a fund for "Scholarships Through Pig Raising" in a foreign country, a fine educational program but not directly related to humane work. We regret that we cannot accede to such requests, for several reasons.

First, we have no time to investigate the legitimacy or significance of these projects. Some individuals have their own pet projects which appear very important to them, but actually can accomplish little or nothing in reducing major animal suffering.

And secondly, if we knew of any other society which is in a better position to use money in helping animals than we are, we would close our doors and turn our present assets and future personal contributions over to that society. That would save the officers and directors of Humane Information Services a lot of work and trauma! But we honestly feel that we can use any contributions our readers are in a position to make more effectively than can any other society. We would not be worth our salt if we didn't!

Practicing What We Preach

We agree in theory with the desirability of neutering male pets as well as spaying females. But Emily cannot be persuaded to have Teddy neutered. She is afraid it will adversely affect his very pleasing personality! She will appreciate hearing from any readers if they have had firsthand experience with neutering a male dog.

EUTHANASIA

In our Report to Humanitarians No. 11 we showed the great need for a real study of euthanasia equipment and methods used in animal shelters and pounds. We pointed to the apparent shortcomings of a number of commonly-used devices, and outlined the steps in a really definitive investigation of the subject.

In that article we purposely refrained from making any definite recommendations for any method, believing that our present knowledge is inadequate to justify such a recommendation. To recommend only one method, such as injections of pentobarbital, might imply that some societies now using other methods, such as good carbon monoxide installations, were inhumane.

However, we received a letter from a veterinarian, Dr. G. B. Schnelle, of Nantucket, Massachusetts, which, while praising our article in general, disagreed with the omission of any reference to pentobarbital. We agree fully with his remarks, given below:

"If the omission of pentobarbital left a vacuum in my mind, it probably did the same to others. A 'trained holder' is certainly necessary for most intravenous injections but certainly not for intra-abdominal. . . . Too many societies put up a great front but carry on very questionable back-room practices. Euthanasia is one of the things entrusted to them which is really their greatest responsibility and in which they actually break faith with their supporters. In view of this, I admire your investigating the subject and in exposing some of the practices, BUT I do think that you should recommend barbiturate injection until there is something better to offer."

WE WERE ASTOUNDED, SHOCKED AND CHAGRINED!

When Humane Information Services was established, we considered many possible names for the society. There are hundreds of humane societies. They have used, for their names, various combinations of words such as "humane", "protection of animals", "animal welfare", "educational", "association", "society", "center", "united", etc. To use any similar combination would be unfair to existing organizations, and possibly confuse our prospective members. The Humane Society of the United States was forced to change the name it originally adopted.

Also, our objectives were significantly different from those of other societies. Essentially, our purpose was to provide the research, analysis and planning that have been so woefully lacking in the humane movement. With this primary objective, we hoped to serve other national as well as local and regional societies as a sort of research and planning department, although we recognized that we also would have to conduct specific action programs designed to fill the gaps left by lack of action on the part of other societies.

With these considerations in mind, we selected the name, Humane Information Services. This name connotes service to the entire humane movement, rather than operation as just another society competing with all the others in the same fields and with the same traditional methods and programs. And it is distinctly different from names used by other societies. We recognized that our name might give the impression that we are a private service organized for profit rather than a tax-exempt charitable society organized and operated solely to prevent the suffering of animals. But after three years of operation we fondly believed that readers of our Reports to Humanitarians and other publications were thoroughly aware of the nature and purposes of the society.

We were, therefore, genuinely astounded, shocked and chagrined to receive a letter from an intelligent, influential, well-informed and devoted humanitarian, who has been one of our more consistent contributors since 1967, and who has generously praised our Reports. She said: "Inasmuch as I assumed you were a private reporting service, I should think the majority of the people you reach assume the same. That is why I sent so little money to you in the past. Even for the service you asked far too little."

We will forever be grateful to this lady for telling us this. Perhaps we should consider changing our name to "Humane Information Society", or something else which more explicitly identifies us as a full-fledged national humane society. This would entail some initial confusion and expense, and would multiply our paper work in dealing with state and federal government agencies. In any event, we must do everything possible to dispel any false impression conveyed by our name and the unusual way in which we operate. WE ARE A NON-PROFIT, TAX-EXEMPT, NATIONAL HUMANE SOCIETY, OPERATED SOLELY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS. We are just as much dependent upon our members for contributions and bequests as any other society. And we believe we can demonstrate unusually careful and effective use of your contributions for the benefit of animals. When you send us dues and contributions you are not merely subscribing to our "paper" -- you are helping to develop and conduct vital humane programs designed to greatly increase the effectiveness of the humane movement. We have no high salaries, expense accounts or extravagances of any kind. WE NEED YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!

ANIMAL SHELTERS —— from page 3 ——

officers. Their principal task seems to be the soothing of ruffled feathers, giving out information about practical problems such as what kind of disinfectant to use, and making good suggestions about fund raising and maintaining a good public image. They do not really lead, but follow what the local societies seem to want. We know of one field representative who is an exception, who frequently lays it on the line; and we have been told by several local society people that his frankness is resented. It is hard to "educate" people who do not want to be educated, as many a school teacher has learned.

In other words, the humane societies that deal with the local shelters have been motivated by the same considerations of emotional reactions, maintaining the flow of contributions, and avoidance of controversy that motivate the local societies. Even those national societies which have built up large endowments, and have sufficient financial stability to permit taking risks of temporary disapproval, seem to habitually pussyfoot in dealing with these problems.

Summary

To sum up the foregoing analysis, it may be said with great confidence that the local societies operating animal shelters have been dealing mainly with symptoms, not causes of pet animal problems of the community. And even in dealing with symptoms, they tend to emphasize the more superficial things rather than those most important in reducing the suffering of the animals handled. All of this may be attributed mainly to lack of real understanding of these problems by members and the general public. Efforts to inform both members and public, in turn, have been largely directed at superficial aspects. Taken as a whole, the humane movement has failed miserably to deal effectively with the problems of pet animals. Drastic reform of policies and programs, from the top down, is badly needed. This will not be accomplished in a day, a month or a year. We hope that this frank discussion, although it may raise the hackles of many people engaged in the operation of both local and national societies, will mark a beginning in the revision of the ideas of the humane movement about how to handle the problems of dogs and cats.

MORE ABOUT SHELTERS IN FUTURE ISSUES

On the Bloodless Bullfight and Other Legislative Fronts

The National Association for Humane Legislation, Inc., reports to us that there have been no major developments on the bullfight front in Florida since the publication of Humane Legislation Digest in June. That organization is pursuing repeal legislation for the next legislature. No bullfights have been held, but there are rumors of one to be put on in Orlando. The City Commission of Miami at least temporarily halted plans for one in that city. The proposed Tampa facility is still in the planning stages.

Some much-needed changes in the Whitehurst bill, H.R. 13957, which was introduced in the United States Congress last fall, were suggested by a group that has been working on laboratory legislation for a number of years, including the Committee for Constructive Laboratory Animal Legislation and the National Association for Humane Legislation. These suggestions were concurred in by other humane leaders who have not worked closely together in the past. This is an encouraging indication that it may be possible to obtain greater unity on this subject, within the humane movement, in the future. The changes were incorporated in a new bill introduced by Representative Foley of Washington, a member of the House Comittee on Agriculture. This is H.R. 18637. Since then, further revisions to care for some important problems have been suggested to Representative Foley by the National Association for Humane Legislation and others. No early action by the Committee or the House is anticipated, but it is evident that introduction of the original Whitehurst bill, and the changes incorporated in the later Foley bill, may have started a train of legislative action which may bear fruit in the next Congress, if not before.

Where are the pictures? — Some people will object to these forbidding expanses of solid type unrelieved by photographs. They may remind us that "a single picture tells more than a thousand words". It does -- to a child. But we are not trying to reach child-minds in this article. Real humanitarians, we know, are willing to read an adult discussion of animal shelters without being entertained by pictures of cute animals or of shelter facilities so familiar to us all.